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POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

"serious maturity." He is an advance agent of civilization, that higher civilization which means wisdom, forbearance, humor, joy in life and magnanimity in death. *H. M.*

THINGS TO BE DONE

Transportation is civilization.—Rudyard Kipling

First, *we should get the tariff off books.* The work of the American Free Trade League may be purely "economic and political"; it is outside the scope of our activities. But a protective tariff on books is an obstacle to the free circulation of thought and *must* be done away with. "Transportation is civilization": that phrase is the most profound that Mr. Kipling has ever written. But the free circulation of thought is the very core and pulse of the matter.

The United States has a new law which permits and even fosters the importation of contemporary painting and sculpture. Is it anything but sloth and ignorance that leaves literature in worse condition than these other arts?

Second, *we should get a good copyright law.* The present law, framed in the interest of a few local mechanics, is also an obstacle to the free circulation of thought. Is there any reason why the United States should lag behind other countries in a matter of this sort?

Third, *let us learn more languages—let more people learn more languages.* The man who reads only one language is, intellectually, only half a man in comparison with the man of equal mental energy who can read two with comfort. All things are not written in one tongue.

Things to Be Done

Fourth, *we should multiply translations*. It is not everyone who has time to learn ten languages, or even two. Competition is of value even in matters of art and intelligence. The better the stock in the store, the more chance of finding what you need. We need more translations of French authors, not only contemporary but eighteenth-century authors. We need translations of German and Russian authors, many more than we get.

We need standards of comparison. All excellence has not risen out of one ant-hill. America is full of provincial people, who do not know that they are provincial, who are insulted if one calls them provincial; even though they have never stopped to inquire whether there are peculiar functions appertaining to provincials, and particular opportunities afforded by the very fact of provincialism, or whether it is a flaw to be, perhaps in part, overcome.

Fifth, *we must try to think, at least a little, about civilization, centralization* and its possible functions, the differentiation of individuals, and the function, advantage or disadvantage of such differentiation.

We should read De Gourmont, De Goncourt. We should not assume that Christ knew more than Confucius *until we have read Confucius*. We should mistrust the local parson and the local professor, remembering that lots of people, not so long ago, were brought up to believe in Carlyle and Macaulay. Nor should we assume that Darwin said the last word, or that Christianity is the religion of all the world, or that what we call Christianity would

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have been recognized as such by most of our ancestors. Codes, etiquettes and moralities have wavered and varied. Irony is still set down as a "sin" in manuals of devotion. The last heretic was burnt at the stake in 1758. We are not yet out of the forest.

It is necessary that the art of poetry should retain *all* its liberties. The poet must be free to recognize the existence of ideas, whatever they are and wherever he finds them.

Questions for Meditation

Is America still a colony? intellectually? in all ways save in her political organization?

Is she self-sufficient?

What is the value of a metropolis? of several?

Is America importing art? and exporting artists?

Does she export "artists", or merely promising embryos which hatch into artists elsewhere?

Does America want foreign books?

Does she originate? or does she merely multiply and dilute?

Is she bigoted? Is her bigotry a danger to the arts?

To what extent does she fear discovery and discoveries?

Is she mistrustful of invention simply because she has no critical sense? no standards whereby to measure achievement? Is this the reason for "booms" and for so many people of "promise" "petering out"?

How many of her authors consider quantity preferable to intensity?

E. P.